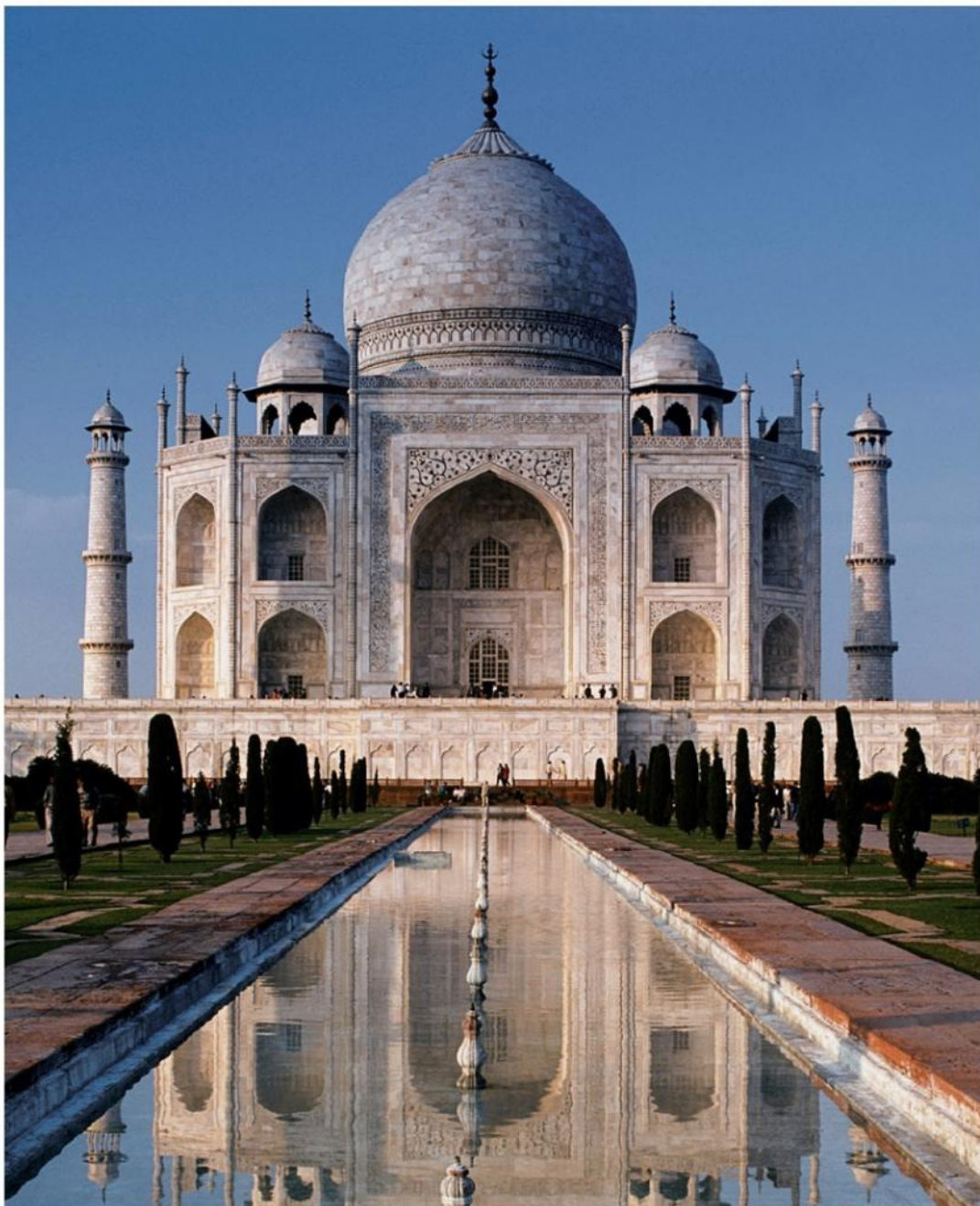


## Art of South and Southeast Asia after 1200



**24-1 • TAJ MAHAL**

Agra, India. Mughal period, reign of Shah Jahan, c. 1632–1648.

 **Watch** an architectural simulation about the Taj Mahal on [myartslab.com](https://myartslab.com)

# Art of South and Southeast Asia

## after 1200

Upon entering the gateway that today serves as the entrance to the great Taj Mahal complex, the visitor beholds the majestic white marble structure that is one of the world's best-known monuments. Its reflection shimmers in the pools of the garden meant to evoke a vision of paradise as described in the Qur'an. The building's façades are delicately inlaid with inscriptions designed by India's foremost calligrapher of the time, Amanat Khan, and floral arabesques in semiprecious stones—carnelian, agate, coral, turquoise, garnet, lapis, and jasper. Above, its luminous, white marble dome reflects each shift in light, flushing rose at dawn, dissolving in its own brilliance in the noonday sun. This extraordinary building, originally and appropriately called the Illuminated Tomb and only from the nineteenth century known as the **TAJ MAHAL** (FIG. 24-1), was built between 1632 and 1648 by the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in childbirth, and likely as a tomb for himself.

Inside, the Taj Mahal invokes the *hasht behisht* ("eight paradises"), with the eight small chambers that ring the interior—one at each corner and one behind each *ivan*, a vaulted opening with an arched portal, that is a typical feature of eastern Islamic architecture. In two stories (for a total

of 16 chambers), the rooms ring the octagonal central area, which rises the full two stories to a domed ceiling that is lower than the outer dome. In this central chamber, surrounded by a finely carved octagonal openwork marble screen, are the exquisite inlaid **cenotaphs** (funerary monuments) of Shah Jahan and his wife, whose actual tombs lie in the crypt below.

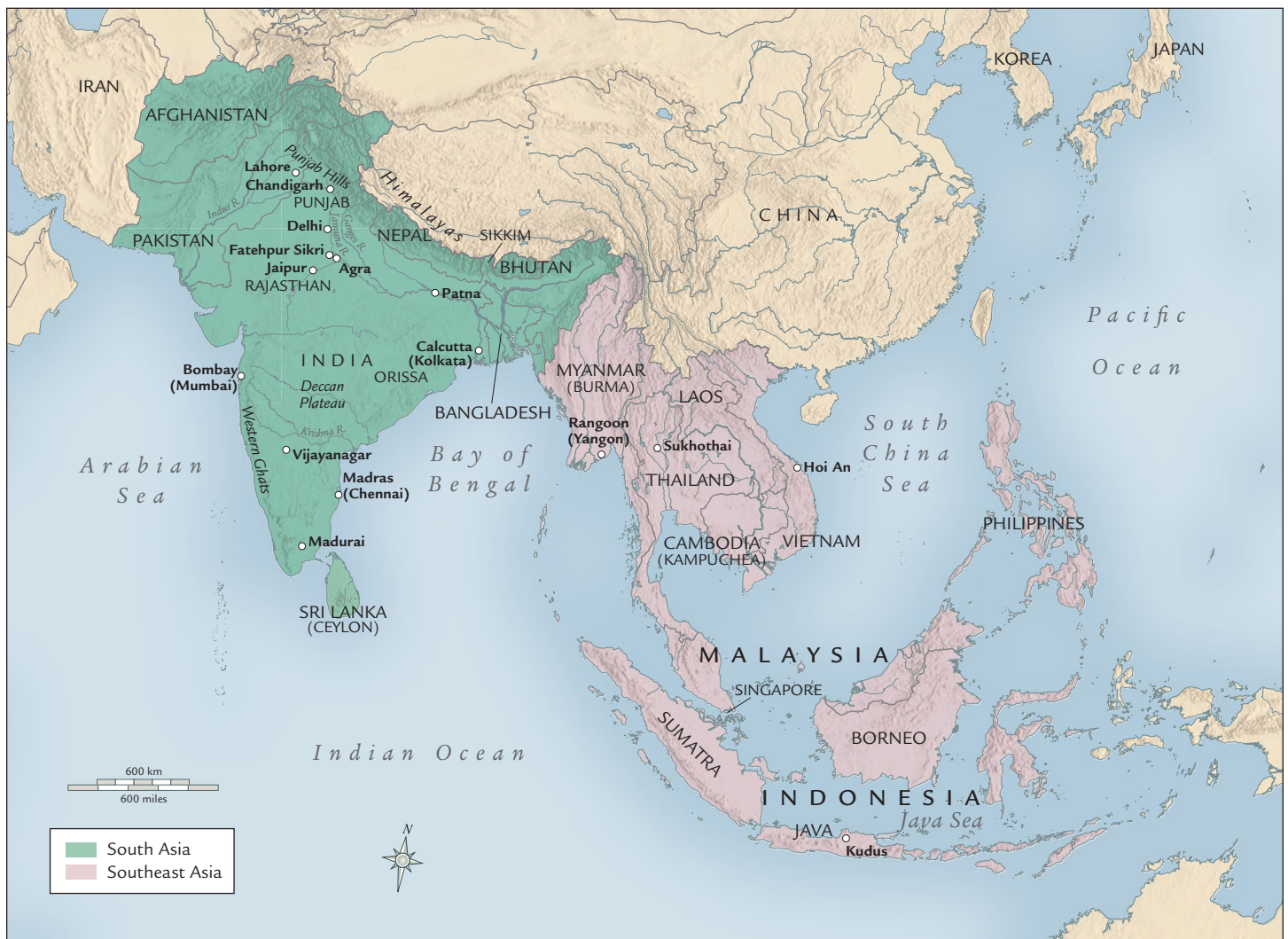
The Taj Mahal complex includes much more than the white marble tomb. On one side is a mosque, while opposite and very similar in appearance is a building that may have served as a rest house. The enormous garden, both in front of the building and in its continuation on the opposite side of the Jamuna River, lends a lush setting consistent with Islamic notions of paradise. Both the side buildings and the two parts of the garden provide a sense of perfect symmetry to the entire complex.

A dynasty of Central Asian origin, the Mughals were the most successful of the many Islamic groups that established themselves in India beginning in the twelfth century. Under their patronage, Persian and Central Asian influences mingled with older traditions of the South Asian subcontinent, adding yet another dimension to the already ancient and complex artistic heritage of India.

### LEARN ABOUT IT

- 24.1** Consider how an artwork's scale and the choice of media relates to its intended function and audience.
- 24.2** Understand how exogenous influences from trade and conquest affected the art of South and Southeast Asia and the way those influences were shaped locally.

- 24.3** Recognize that similar-looking works of art, like religious icons or traditional architectural forms, can function differently in different contexts.
- 24.4** Understand how a work of art like the Taj Mahal or a Khmer Buddha can have both a personal and public meaning.



**MAP 24-1 • SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Throughout its history, the kingdoms comprising the Indian subcontinent engaged—sometimes peacefully, sometimes militarily—with neighboring and more distant people, contributing significantly to the development of its art.

## SOUTH ASIA AFTER 1200

By 1200, India was already among the world's oldest civilizations (see "Foundations of Indian Culture," page 774). The art that survives from its earlier periods is almost exclusively sacred, most of it inspired by the three principal religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. These three religions remained a primary focus for Indian art, even as dynasties arriving from the northwest began to establish the new religious culture of Islam.

### CHANGES IN RELIGION AND ART

After many centuries of prominence, Buddhism began to decline as a cultural force in India after the eighth century. As patronage diminished, many Indian Buddhist monks sought out more supportive communities in Southeast Asia for whom Buddhism remained an important religion. At the start of the twelfth century, Kyanzittha, the Burmese king of Bagan, who was known to have hosted Indian monks, actually sent crews to Buddhist centers

in South Asia to repair the neglected monuments. By 1200, the remaining Buddhist enclaves in South Asia were concentrated in the northeast, in the region that had been ruled by the Pala dynasty (c. 750–1199). There, in great monastic universities that attracted monks from as far away as China, Korea, and Japan, a form of Buddhism known as Tantrism or Vajrayana was cultivated.

Over these same centuries, Hinduism quickly rose to new prominence, inspiring grand temples, sculpture, and poetry across the subcontinent. Jainism continued to prosper as its relatively small community of adherents grew in regional influence. And the new religion of Islam entered from the northwest, growing to have a profound influence on South Asian culture.

**THE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESHVARA** The practices of Tantric Buddhism, which include techniques for visualizing deities, encourage the development of images with precise iconographic details such as the twelfth-century gilt-bronze sculpture





**24-2 • THE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESHVARA**

From Kurkihar, Bihar. Pala dynasty, 12th century. Gilt-bronze, height 10" (25.5 cm). Patna Museum, Patna.

of **THE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESHVARA** in **FIGURE 24-2** from the site of Kurkihar in eastern India. Bodhisattvas are compassionate beings who are well advanced on the path to buddhahood (enlightenment) and who have vowed to help others achieve enlightenment. Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of greatest compassion, who vowed to forgo buddhahood until all others become buddhas, became the most popular of these saintly beings in India and in East Asia.

Characteristic of bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara is distinguished in art by his princely garments, unlike a buddha, who wears monk's robes. Avalokiteshvara is specifically recognized by the lotus flower he holds and by the presence in his crown of his "parent" Buddha, in this case Amitabha, the Buddha of the Western Pure Land (a Buddhist paradise). Other marks of Avalokiteshvara's extraordinary status are the third eye (symbolizing his omniscience) and the wheel on his palm (an emblem of the Buddhist *dharma*). Avalokiteshvara is shown here in the relaxed pose known as the posture of "royal ease." One leg angles down; the other is drawn up onto the lotus seat.

With the fall of the Pala dynasty in the late twelfth century, the last centers of Buddhism in northern India collapsed, and most of the monks dispersed, mainly into Nepal and Tibet (**MAP 24-1**). From that time, they have remained the principal stronghold of Tantric Buddhist practice and its arts. The artistic style perfected under the Palas, however, came to influence international style throughout East and Southeast Asia.

**LUNA VASAHI, MOUNT ABU** The history of Jainism makes an interesting counterpoint to that of Buddhism. Although both are monastic traditions, the Jains never gained the widespread popularity of Buddhism but neither did they suffer a precipitous decline. The Jain religion traces its roots to a spiritual leader called Mahavira (c. 599–527 BCE), whom it regards as the last in a series of 24 saviors known as pathfinders (*tirthankaras*). Devotees seek through purification and moral action to become worthy of escaping the cycle of rebirth. Jain monks live a life of austerity, and even lay persons avoid killing any living creature. The Jain commitment to non-violence means that there are relatively few Jain kings in South Asian history, but this same commitment led many Jains to gravitate toward lucrative professions in banking and trade. It is from these ranks of merchants and ministers that some of the most important donors of Jain art come, as in the case of the Dilwara Temples erected on Mount Abu in Rajasthan, India. The modest exterior enclosure walls and relatively small size of the of the five Dilwara Temples do little to prepare the visitor for the lacelike splendor of the interior. Every inch of these spaces is filled with deeply cut relief carvings in white marble whose complicated details had to be produced through abrasion and rubbing rather than with a chisel. One of the most impressive of these temples, the Luna Vasahi, was dedicated to the 22nd Jain *tirthankara*, Neminatha, and was built in 1230 by two brothers, Tejapala and Vastupala, who served as ministers to the local ruler. They are known to have sponsored temples in at least two other locations. The structure has had to be repaired in places, the damage most likely caused by raids, but most of the delicate sculpture is still intact.

The main sanctuary is set in a courtyard surrounded by two columned arcades. These open to reveal the temple's most impressive architectural feature, the ornate dome that crowns the *mandapa* hall. This corbeled dome is made of concentric bands of sculpted stone capped with a meticulously carved pendant which hangs down from the apex. Surrounding this decorative element are images of 16 goddesses of wisdom, attached individually to the surface of the dome. This, in turn, is held aloft by eight pillars linked by undulating architraves (**FIG. 24-3**). Every surface is adorned with narrative scenes, animals, protective deities, and plant motifs. These riotous forms highlight the calm, unadorned image of the *tirthankara*, which looks out from the quietude of the sanctuary. The dramatic contrast speaks to the difference between the active world of constant rebirth and the steady peace of enlightenment.

The earliest civilization on the Indian subcontinent flourished toward the end of the third millennium BCE along the Indus River in present-day Pakistan. Remains of its expertly engineered brick cities have been uncovered, together with works of art that intriguingly suggest spiritual practices and reveal artistic traits known in later Indian culture.

The decline of the Indus civilization during the mid second millennium BCE coincides with the arrival from the northwest of a seminomadic people who spoke an Indo-European language and referred to themselves as Aryans. Over the next millennium they were influential in formulating the new civilization that gradually emerged. The most important Aryan contributions to this new civilization included the Sanskrit language and the sacred texts called the Vedas. The evolution of Vedic thought under the influence of indigenous Indian beliefs culminated in the mystical philosophical texts called the Upanishads, which took shape sometime after 800 BCE.

The Upanishads teach that the material world is illusory; only Brahman, the universal soul, is real and eternal. We—that is, our individual souls—are trapped in this illusion in a relentless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The ultimate goal of religious life is to liberate ourselves from this cycle and to unite our individual soul with Brahman.

Buddhism and Jainism are two of the many religions that developed in the wake of Upanishadic thought. Buddhism (see “Buddhism,” page 301) is based on the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, who lived in central India about 500 BCE. Jainism was shaped slightly earlier by the followers of the spiritual leader Mahavira. Both religions acknowledged the cyclical nature of existence and taught a means of liberation from it, but they rejected the authority, rituals, and social strictures of Vedic

religion. Whereas the Vedic religion was in the hands of a hereditary priestly class, Buddhist and Jain communities welcomed all members of society, which gave them great appeal. The Vedic tradition eventually evolved into the many sects now collectively known as Hinduism (see “Hinduism,” page 309).

Through most of its history India was a mosaic of regional dynastic kingdoms, but from time to time empires emerged that unified large parts of the subcontinent. The first was that of the Maurya dynasty (c. 322–185 BCE), whose great king Ashoka patronized Buddhism. From this time Buddhist doctrines spread widely and its artistic traditions were established.

In the first century CE the Kushans, a Central Asian people, created an empire extending from present-day Afghanistan down into central India. Buddhism prospered under Kanishka, the most powerful Kushan king, and spread into Central Asia and to East Asia. At this time, under the new Kushan cultural and political climate, the image of the Buddha in art first appeared.

Later, under the Gupta dynasty (c. 320–550 CE) in northern India, Buddhist art and culture reached a high point. However, Gupta monarchs also patronized Hindu art, and from this time Hinduism grew to become the dominant Indian religious tradition, with its emphasis on the great gods Vishnu, Shiva, and the Goddess—all with multiple forms.

After the tenth century, numerous regional dynasties prevailed, some quite powerful and long-lasting. Hindu temples, in particular, developed monumental and complex forms that were rich in symbolism and ritual function, with each region of India producing its own variation.



**24-3 • LUNA VASAH, MANDAPA CEILING**  
Mount Abu, India. 1230.

**TEMPLE AT MADURAI** As Buddhism gradually declined, Hinduism grew in prominence. With the increasing popularity of Hindu sects came the rapid development of Hindu temples. Spurred by the ambitious building programs of wealthy rulers, well-formulated regional styles had evolved by about 900. The most spectacular structures of the era were monumental, with a complexity and grandeur of proportion rarely equaled even in later Indian art.

Emphasis on monumental temples gave way to the building of vast temple complexes and more moderately scaled, yet more richly ornamented, individual temples. These developments took place largely in the south of India, although some of the largest temples are in the north, for example, the Sun Temple at Konarak, built in the thirteenth century, and the Govind Deva Temple in Brindavan, built in the sixteenth century under the patronage of the Mughal emperor Akbar. The mightiest of the southern Indian kingdoms was Vijayanagar (c. 1336–1565), whose rulers successfully countered the potential incursions of neighboring dynasties,



both Hindu and Muslim, for more than 200 years. Under the patronage of the Vijayanagar kings and their successors, the Nayaks, some of India's most spectacular Hindu architecture was created.

The enormous temple complex at Madurai, one of the capitals of the Nayaks, is an example of this fervent expression of Hindu faith. Founded around the thirteenth century, it is dedicated to the goddess Minakshi (the local name for Parvati, the consort of the god Shiva) and to Sundareshvara (the local name for Shiva himself). The temple complex stands in the center of the city and is the focus of Madurai life. At its heart are the two oldest shrines, one to Minakshi and the other to Sundareshvara. Successive additions over the centuries gradually expanded the complex around these small shrines and came to dominate the visual landscape. The most dramatic features of this and similar southern "temple cities" were the thousand-pillar halls, large ritual-bathing pools, and especially the entrance gateways (**gopuras**) that tower above the temple site and the surrounding city like modern skyscrapers (FIG. 24-4).

*Gopuras* proliferated as a temple city grew, necessitating new and bigger enclosing walls, and thus new gateways. Successive rulers, often seeking to outdo their predecessors, donated taller and taller *gopuras*. As a result, the tallest structures in temple cities are often at the periphery, rather than at the central temples, which are sometimes totally overwhelmed by the height of the surrounding structures. The temple complex at Madurai has 11 *gopuras*, the largest over 160 feet tall.

Formally, the *gopura* has its roots in the pyramidal tower characteristic of the seventh-century southern temple style. As the *gopura* evolved, it took on the graceful concave silhouette shown here. The exterior is embellished with thousands of sculpted figures, evoking a teeming world of gods and goddesses. Inside, stairs lead to the top for an extraordinary view.

**QUTB MINAR** Traders and merchants were probably the first to bring Islam to South Asia, but the backing of powerful



**24-4 • OUTER GOPURA OF THE MINAKSHI-SUNDARESHVARA TEMPLE**

Madurai, Tamil Nadu, south India. Nayak dynasty, mostly 13th to mid 17th century, with modern renovations.



**24-5 • QUTB MINAR**

Quwwat ul-Islam Mosque, Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Delhi.  
1211–1236.

political rulers, which helped to establish it across the region, did not occur until the eighth century, when Arab armies captured a small territory near the Indus River. Later, beginning around 1000, Turkic factions from Central Asia, relatively recent converts to Islam, began military campaigns into north India, at first purely for plunder, then seeking territorial control. From the thirteenth century various Turkic and Afghan dynasties ruled portions of the subcontinent from the northern city of Delhi. These sultanates, as they are known, constructed forts, mausoleums, monuments, and mosques.

The first Delhi Sultanate was founded in 1206 by Qutb-ud-din Aibak of the Slave dynasty, so named because Aibak had begun his life as a soldier-slave (*mamluk*) under the Ghorids. Although he did not reign long, he began construction of a large mosque adorned with a truly massive minaret. The mosque complex, called Quwwat ul-Islam (strength of Islam), was built over the citadel of Delhi's previous rulers and portions of the Jain and

Hindu religious structures from this location were reused in the construction of the mosque. By far the most visible element of this complex is the tower known as the **QUTB MINAR** (FIG. 24-5). This minaret was begun by Aibak and completed under his successor Iltutmish. It stands over 237 feet high and was among the tallest structures in South Asia at the time. It was constructed of sandstone in five segments, each of which is marked by the presence of a balcony that encircles the tower. The stories get smaller further up the tower and the final balcony rests on the top. Minarets are traditionally used to call Muslims to prayer, but this tower is too tall to serve that purpose easily and serves more clearly as an expression of power and political authority than as a functioning religious structure.

## MUGHAL PERIOD

The Mughals, like many of the Delhi sultans, came from Central Asia. Muhammad Zahir-ud-Din, known as Babur ("Lion" or "Panther"), was the first Mughal emperor of India (r. 1526–30). He emphasized his Turkic heritage, though he had equally impressive Mongol ancestry. After some initial conquests in Central Asia, he amassed an empire stretching from Afghanistan to Delhi, which he conquered in 1526. Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the third ruler, extended Mughal control over most of north India, and under his two successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, northern India was generally unified by 1658. The Mughal Empire lasted until 1858, when the last Mughal emperor was deposed and exiled to Burma (Myanmar) by the British.

Mughal architects were heir to a 300-year-old tradition of Islamic building in India. The Delhi sultans who preceded them had great forts housing government and court buildings. Their architects had introduced two fundamental Islamic structures, the mosque and the tomb, along with construction based on the arch and the dome. (Earlier Indian architecture had been based primarily on post-and-lintel construction.) They had also drawn freely on Indian architecture, borrowing both decorative and structural elements to create a variety of hybrid styles, and had especially benefited from the centuries-old Indian virtuosity in stonecarving and masonry. The Mughals followed in this tradition, synthesizing Indian, Persian, and Central Asian elements for their forts, palaces, mosques, tombs, and cenotaphs (tombs or monuments to someone whose remains are actually somewhere else).


The third emperor, Akbar presided over a period of openness and expansion. His inclusive policies and tolerance toward religious difference did much to help solidify and stabilize his massive empire. A dynamic, humane, and just leader, Akbar enjoyed religious discourse and loved the arts, especially painting. He created an imperial atelier (workshop) of painters, which he placed under the direction of two artists from the Persian court. Learning from these two masters, the Indian painters of the atelier soon transformed Persian styles into the more vigorous, naturalistic styles that mark Mughal painting (see "Indian Painting on Paper," page 782).



**FATEHPUR SIKRI** Despite all this success Akbar was concerned about who would follow him on the throne. In desperation, he sought the advice of the Sufi mystic Shaikh Salim Chishti. This Muslim holy man foretold the birth of a prince, and when his prediction proved accurate, Akbar built a new capital near Chishti's home to commemorate and celebrate the event. Built primarily during Akbar's residence at the site from about 1572 to 1585, there are two major components to Fatehpur Sikri: a religious section including the Jami Mosque, which houses the tomb of Salim Chishti, and the administrative and residential section. Among the most extraordinary buildings in the administrative and residential section is the private audience hall or **DIWAN-I-KHAS** (FIG. 24-6). In the center of the hall is a tall pillar supporting a circular platform reached by four walkways. On this perch Akbar could sit in safety as he received his nobles and dispensed justice. The structure recalls, perhaps consciously, the pillars erected by Ashoka (see Chapter 10) to promulgate his law.



**24-6 • DIWAN-I-KHAS (PRIVATE AUDIENCE HALL)**  
Fatehpur Sikri, India. 1570.

 **View** the Closer Look for the Diwan-i-Khas (private audience hall) on [myartslab.com](http://myartslab.com)



**24-7 • AKBAR INSPECTING THE CONSTRUCTION OF FATEHPUR SIKRI**

From the *Akbarnama*. c. 1590. Opaque watercolor on paper, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  10" (37.5  $\times$  25 cm). Victoria & Albert Museum, London. (I.S.2-1896 91/117)

Many of the painters in the Mughal imperial workshops are recorded in texts of the period. Based on those records and on signatures that occur on some paintings, the design of this work has been attributed to Tulsi Kalan (Tulsi the Elder), the painting to Bandi, and the portraits to Madhu Kalan (Madhu the Elder) or Madhu Khurd (Madhu the Younger).

Unlike most Mughal emperors, Akbar did not write his own biography; instead he entrusted its creation to his vizier Abul Fazl. This text, the *Akbarnama*, details the actions and accomplishments of the emperor including the events leading to the construction of Fatehpur Sikri. Paintings commissioned to illustrate this event round out our understanding of Mughal building techniques and reveal Akbar's personal interest in the progress. Among the most fascinating illustrations in this manuscript are those that record Akbar's supervision of the construction of Fatehpur Sikri. One painting (FIG. 24-7) documents his inspection of the stonemasons and other craftsmakers. Akbar's love of painting set a royal precedent that his successors enthusiastically continued.



At first glance this painting of two rulers embracing seems to tell of a close bond of friendship between the men (FIG. 24-8). The presence of a lion and lamb lying peacefully together, an ancient symbol of harmony, also appears to bolster this interpretation. Indeed, the fact that the men are framed by the sun and moon while standing on a map of the world might imply that these bonds of trust and peace extend even to their respective states. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

This painting was created in a moment of high tension between Shah Abbas and the Mughal throne. The trouble centered on Kandahar in Afghanistan. The prosperous city had been given to Shah Abbas's ancestor by the Mughal emperor Humayun, but later, in the time of Akbar, the Mughals took back control of the city. Shah Abbas then waited for a chance to reclaim it, believing it was his right to do so. When the Mughals were distracted by a war in Iran, he seized the opportunity and recaptured Kandahar in a swift assault. He immediately made conciliatory gestures to Jahangir, who was furious but unable to spare the military force needed to retake the city.

Another look at the painting reveals new details. Jahangir is depicted much larger than Shah Abbas, who appears to bow deferentially to the Mughal emperor. Jahangir's head is centered in the halo and he stands on the predatory lion, whose body spans a vast territory, including Shah Abbas's own holdings

in Afghanistan and Iran. These details invert the initial impression conveyed by the subject, revealing a new meaning. The painting is a strong reminder of Mughal power and a potent warning against further expansion, but couched in the diplomatic language of reconciliation.



## 24-8 • Nadir al-Zaman (Abu'l Hasan)

### JAHANGIR AND SHAH ABBAS

From the St. Petersburg Album. Mughal period, c. 1618. Opaque watercolor, gold and ink on paper,  $9\frac{3}{8}'' \times 6''$  (23.8 × 15.4 cm). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchase, F1945.9. Freer Gallery, Washington



**24-9 • JAHANGIR AND PRINCE KHURRAM FEASTED  
BY NUR JAHAN**

Mughal period, 1617. Paint and gold on paper,  $9\frac{15}{16}$ "  $\times$   $5\frac{5}{8}$ "  
(25.2  $\times$  14.3 cm). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC. Gift of Charles Lang Freer (F1907.258)

**PAINTING IN THE COURT OF JAHANGIR** Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), Akbar's son and successor, was a connoisseur of painting; he had his own workshop, which he established even before he became emperor. His focus on detail was much greater than that of his father. In his memoirs, he claimed:

My liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such a point that when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or of those of the present day, without their names being told me I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man, and if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each of them. And if any other person has put in the eye and eyebrow of a face, I can perceive whose work the original face is and who has painted the eye and eyebrows.

Portraits become a major art under Jahangir. We can only speculate on the target audience for the portrait Jahangir commissioned of himself with the Safavid-dynasty Persian ruler, Shah Abbas. A painting of such small size could not be publicly displayed and was, therefore, certainly not intended for Jahangir's subjects. But because we know that paintings were commonly conveyed by embassies from one kingdom to another, it may have been intended as a gift for Shah Abbas, one with a message of clear strength and superiority cloaked in the diplomatic language of cordiality (see "Painting of Jahangir and Shah Abbas," opposite).

Despite the proliferation of portrait painting, depictions of court women occur rarely in Mughal art due in part to the restricted access male painters had to the women's quarters. An important exception to this was Jahangir's favorite wife, the Empress Nur Jahan, of whom a few images exist. As Jahangir grew older he succumbed to addiction and illness. During this period, in which he was largely incapacitated, Nur Jahan ran the empire on his behalf, carrying his seal and issuing decrees in his name. Although she ruled in Jahangir's name, the images of her at court and the imperial coins that bore her name suggest her role was no secret.

The idyllic scene depicted in **FIGURE 24-9** portrays Nur Jahan serving food and drink to Jahangir and his son by another wife, Prince Khurram. Seated on ornate carpets the royal family members sit near a fountain as court women bring food and wave fans. This deceptively harmonious tableau is qualified by the verses in Persian surrounding the painting. These refer to Jahangir's displeasure over Khurram's attempts to take the throne, an outcome that Nur Jahan also wished to forestall. After Jahangir died, however, and Nur Jahan was confined to her palace, Khurram managed to seize the throne, taking the royal name Shah Jahan.



**THE TAJ MAHAL** Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58) achieved a number of military and political victories but he is best known as the patron of what is perhaps the most famous of all Indian Islamic structures, the Taj Mahal. Built between 1631 and 1648 on the banks of the Jamuna River, it was commissioned as a mausoleum for Mumtaz Mahal, the wife of Shah Jahan, who is believed to have taken a major part in overseeing its design and construction. Shah Jahan's personal motivations add a poignancy to this structure, but it must also be recalled that this was the first major architectural undertaking of Shah Jahan's reign. That the Taj Mahal effectively evokes both personal loss and imperial authority is perhaps its most remarkable strength.


As visitors enter through a monumental, hall-like gate, the tomb rises before them across a spacious garden set with long reflecting pools (see **FIG. 24-1**). Measuring some 1,000 by 1,900 feet, the enclosure is unobtrusively divided into quadrants planted with trees and flowers, and framed by broad walkways and stone inlaid in geometric patterns. In Shah Jahan's time, fruit trees and





#### 24-10 • TAJ MAHAL, DETAIL

Agra, India. Mughal period, reign of Shah Jahan, c. 1631–1648.

 [View](#) the Closer Look for the Taj Mahal on myartslab.com

cypresses—symbolic of life and death, respectively—lined the walkways, and fountains played in the shallow pools. Collectively these features evoked paradise on earth.

Recent archaeology has revealed that the garden continues on the far bank of the Jamuna River. A garden filled with night-blooming plants and a large octagonal fountain provided a vantage point for viewing the Taj Mahal from across the river. Thus while the structure appears to visitors to be set at the end of a garden, it is in fact in the center of a four-part garden, a traditional Mughal tomb setting used for earlier tombs. The tomb is flanked by two smaller structures not visible in FIGURE 24-1, one a mosque and the other a hall designed to mirror it. Like the entrance hall, they are made mostly of red sandstone, rendering even more startling the full glory of the tomb's white marble, a material previously reserved for the tombs of saints and here implying an elevated religious stature for Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal. The tomb is raised higher than these structures on its own marble platform emphasizing its importance. This aggrandizement of the tomb is further achieved by having the minarets flank the tomb rather than the mosque. The minarets' three levels correspond to those of the tomb, creating a bond between them. Crowning each minaret is a **chattri** (pavilion). Traditional embellishments of Indian palaces, *chattris* quickly passed into the vocabulary of Indian Islamic architecture, where they appear prominently. A lucid geometric symmetry pervades the tomb. It is basically square, but its **chamfered**

(sliced-off) corners create a subtle octagon. Measured to the base of the **finial** (the spire at the top), the tomb is almost exactly as tall as it is wide. Each façade is identical, with a central *iwān* flanked by two stories of smaller *iwāns*. By creating voids in the façades, these *iwāns* contribute to the building's sense of weightlessness. On the roof, four octagonal *chattris*, one at each corner, create a visual transition to the lofty, bulbous dome. Framed but not obscured by the *chattris*, the dome rises gracefully and is lifted higher by its drum than in earlier Mughal tombs, allowing the swelling curves and elegant lines of its surprisingly large form to emerge with perfect clarity.

The pristine surfaces of the Taj Mahal are embellished with utmost subtlety (FIG. 24-10). Even the sides of the platform on which the Taj Mahal stands are carved in relief with a **blind arcade** (decorative arches set into a wall) motif and carved relief panels of flowers. The portals are framed with verses from the Qur'an and inlaid in black marble, while the spandrels are decorated with floral arabesques inlaid in colored semiprecious stones, a technique known by its Italian name *pietra dura*. Not strong enough to detract from the overall purity of the white marble, the embellishments enliven the surfaces of this impressive yet delicate masterpiece.

**RAJPUT PAINTING** Outside the Mughal strongholds at Delhi and Agra, much of northern India was governed regionally by



local princes, often descendants of the so-called Hindu Rajput warrior clans, who were allowed to keep their lands in return for allegiance to the Mughals. Like the Mughals, Rajput princes frequently supported painters at their courts, and in these settings a variety of strong, indigenous Indian painting styles were perpetuated. Rajput painting, more abstract than the Mughal style, included subjects like those treated by Mughal painters, royal portraits and court scenes, as well as indigenous subjects such as Hindu myths, love poetry, and Ragamala illustrations (illustrations of musical modes).

The Hindu devotional movement known as *bhakti*, which had done much to spread the faith in the south from around the seventh century, now experienced a revival in the north. As it had earlier in the south, *bhakti* inspired an outpouring of poetic literature, this time devoted especially to Krishna, the popular human incarnation of the god Vishnu. Most renowned is the *Gita*

*Govinda*, a cycle of rhapsodic poems about the love between God and humans expressed metaphorically through the love between the young Krishna and the cowherd Radha.

The illustration here (FIG. 24-11) is from a manuscript of the *Gita Govinda* probably produced in present-day Rajasthan about 1525–1550. The blue god Krishna sits in dalliance with a group of cowherd women. Standing with her maid and consumed with love for Krishna, Radha peers through the trees, overcome by jealousy. Her feelings are indicated by the cool blue color behind her, while the crimson red behind the Krishna grouping suggests passion. The bold patterns of curving stalks and flowering vines express both the exuberance of springtime, when the story unfolds, and the heightened emotional tensions of the scene. Birds, trees, and flowers are as brilliant as fireworks against the black, hilly landscape edged in an undulating white line. All the figures are of a single type, with plump faces in profile and oversized eyes. Yet the resilient line of



**24-11 • KRISHNA AND THE GOPIS**

From the *Gita Govinda*, Rajasthan, India. Mughal period, c. 1525–1550. Gouache on paper,  $4\frac{7}{8}'' \times 7\frac{1}{2}''$  (12.3 × 19 cm). Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai.

The lyrical poem *Gita Govinda*, by the poet-saint Jayadeva, was probably written in eastern India during the latter half of the twelfth century. The episode illustrated here occurs early in the relationship of Radha and Krishna, which in the poem is a metaphor for the connection between humans and God. The poem traces the progress of their love through separation, reconciliation, and fulfillment.



## TECHNIQUE | Indian Painting on Paper

Before the fourteenth century most painting in India had been on walls or palm leaves. With the introduction of paper, about the same time in India as in Europe, Indian artists adopted painting techniques from Persia and over the ensuing centuries produced jewel-toned works on paper.

Painters usually began their training early. As young apprentices, they learned to make brushes and grind pigments. Brushes were made from the curved hairs of a squirrel's tail, arranged to taper from a thick base to a single hair at the tip. Paint came from pigments of vegetables and minerals—lapis lazuli to make blue, malachite for pale green—that were ground to a paste with water, then bound with a solution of gum from the acacia plant. Paper was made by crushing fibers of cotton and jute to a pulp, pouring the mixture onto a woven mat, drying it, and then burnishing with a smooth piece of agate, often achieving a glossy finish.

First, the painter applied a thin wash of a chalk-based white, which

sealed the surface of the paper while allowing the underlying sketch to show through. Next, outlines were filled with thick washes of brilliant, opaque, unmodulated color. When the colors were dry, the painting was laid face down on a smooth marble surface and burnished with a rounded agate stone, rubbing first up and down, then side to side. The indirect pressure against the marble polished the pigments to a high luster. Then outlines, details, and modeling—depending on the style—were added with a fine brush.

Sometimes certain details were purposely left until last, such as the eyes, which were said to bring the painting to life. Gold and raised details were applied when the painting was nearly finished. Gold paint, made from pulverized, 24-carat gold leaf bound with acacia gum, was applied with a brush and burnished to a high shine. Raised details such as the pearls of a necklace were made with thick, white, chalk-based paint, with each pearl a single droplet hardened into a tiny raised mound.

the drawing gives them life, and the variety of textile patterns provides some individuality. The intensity of the color and resolute flatness of the scene engage the viewer in the drama.



**24-12 • HOUR OF COWDUST**

From Punjab Hills, India. Mughal period, Kangra School, c. 1790. Gouache on paper, 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ " × 12 $\frac{9}{16}$ " (36 × 31.9 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Denman W. Ross Collection (22.683)

Quite a different mood pervades **HOUR OF COWDUST**, a work from the Kangra School in the Punjab Hills, foothills of the Himalayas north of Delhi (**FIG. 24-12**). Painted around 1790, some 250 years later than the *Gita Govinda* illustration, it shows the influence of Mughal naturalism on the later schools of Indian painting. The theme is again Krishna. Wearing his peacock crown, garland of flowers, and yellow garment—all traditional iconography of Krishna-Vishnu—he returns to the village with his fellow cowherds and their cattle. All eyes are upon him as he plays his flute, said to enchant all who hear it. Women with water jugs on their heads turn to look; others lean from windows to watch and call out to him. We are drawn into this charming village scene by the diagonal movements of the cows as they surge through the gate and into the courtyard beyond. Pastel houses and walls create a sense of space, and in the distance we glimpse other villagers going about their work or peacefully sitting in their houses. A rim of dark trees softens the horizon, and an atmospheric sky completes the aura of enchanted naturalism. Again, all the figures are similar in type, this time with a perfection of proportion and a gentle, lyrical movement that complement the idealism of the setting.

### BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD AND THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

By the time *Hour of Cowdust* was painted, India's regional rulers, both Hindu and Muslim, had reasserted themselves, and the vast Mughal Empire had shrunk to a small area around Delhi. At the same time, however, a new power, Britain, was making itself felt, inaugurating a markedly different period in Indian history.

First under the mercantile interests of the British East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then under the direct control of the British government as a part of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, India was brought forcefully into contact with the West and its culture. The political





**24-13 • Frederick Stevens VICTORIA TERMINUS**  
Mumbai, India. 1887.

concerns of the British Empire extended even to the arts. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the great cities of India, such as Calcutta (present-day Kolkata), Madras (Chennai), and Bombay (Mumbai), took on a European aspect as British architects built in the revivalist styles favored in England.

**VICTORIA TERMINUS, MUMBAI** The British insistence on utilizing European styles of architecture was at its most strident in the early years of colonial rule. Even after South Asia transitioned to direct control by the British Crown in 1858, a period known as the Raj, British architects were keen on emphasizing difference. Nowhere is this more visible than at the **VICTORIA TERMINUS** (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus) in Mumbai (**FIG. 24-13**). This massive train station built in a Gothic Revival style was designed by architect Frederick William Stevens and opened in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The building makes a few concessions to its South Asian setting, as with the inclusion of turretlike domes, but it is overwhelmingly a self-conscious statement of British imperial power. This pairing of cathedral architecture and train station celebrates ideas of British technology and authority. In place of the saints that might normally decorate a cathedral,

personifications of Progress, Commerce, Agriculture, and Science adorn the exterior. Originally, this structure was crowned by an image of Queen Victoria, which has subsequently been removed.

**GATEWAY OF INDIA, MUMBAI** Over time, the British reduced their insistence on promoting difference through their choice of architectural forms and began to appreciate aspects of indigenous style. Completed in 1924, the **GATEWAY OF INDIA** was built to welcome King George V on his visit to India (**FIG. 24-14**). The British constructed the monument in the form of a European triumphal arch, while embellishing it with architec-



**24-14 • George Wittet**  
**GATEWAY OF INDIA**  
Mumbai, India. 1924.





24-15 • Abanindranath Tagore

**BHARAT MATA (MOTHER INDIA)**

1905. Watercolor on paper, 10½" × 6" (26.7 × 15.3 cm). Rabindra Bharati Society, Kolkata.

tural features drawn heavily from South Asian precedents. Stone screens, ornate brackets, pointed arches, and floral decorations were taken directly from earlier architectural practices in the subcontinent. This hybrid style, known as the Indo-Saracenic style, borrows techniques from the Hindu and Muslim architectural traditions of South Asia and became the preferred architectural style for British governmental buildings and elite private estates by the late nineteenth century, a few examples of which were built in England and in other parts of the empire. India won its independence in 1947 and the last British troops in South Asia departed through this gate a year later in 1948.

**MOTHER INDIA** Far prior to Britain's consolidation of imperial power in New Delhi a new spirit asserting Indian independence and pan-Asiatic solidarity was awakening. For example, working near Calcutta (Kolkata), the painter Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951)—nephew of the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), who went on to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913—deliberately rejected the medium of oil painting and the academic realism of Western art. Like the Nihonga artists of Japan (see FIG. 26-18) with whom he was in contact, Tagore strove to create a style that reflected his ethnic origins. In **BHARAT MATA** (Mother India) he invents a nationalistic icon by using Hindu

Prior to the fourteenth century China dominated the international trade in ceramics, but with the rise of the Ming dynasty, China began to look inward, limiting and regulating most forms of international trade. The resulting scarcity of Chinese trade ceramics, sometimes called the “Ming gap,” was an opportunity for the merchants and artists of Southeast Asia. Both the Burmese and Thai kingdoms produced ceramics, often inspired by stonewares and porcelains from China. Sukhothai potters, for example, made green-glazed and brown-glazed wares at the renowned kilns of Sawankhalok. But it was the potters of Vietnam who were most successful in meeting the international demand for porcelains. So many

ceramics were exported from Vietnam that most of what remained to be found by archaeologists were the broken or discarded leftovers.

This changed with the excavation of a sunken ship laden with ceramics for export found 22 miles off the coast of Hoi An. This wreck brought to light over 250,000 ceramic works made by Vietnamese potters of the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century (FIG. 24-16). Painted in underglaze cobalt blue and further embellished with overglaze enamels, these wares were shipped throughout Southeast Asia and beyond, as far east as Japan and as far west as England and the Netherlands.



**24-16 • GROUP OF VIETNAMESE CERAMICS FROM THE HOI AN HOARD**

Late 15th to early 16th century. Porcelain with underglaze blue decoration; barbed-rim dishes: (left) diameter 14" (35.1 cm); (right) diameter 13¼" (34.7 cm). Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona. (2000.105–109)

symbols while also drawing upon the format and techniques of Mughal and Rajput painting (FIG. 24-15).

## SOUTHEAST ASIA AFTER 1200

India's Buddhist and Hindu traditions found acceptance in Southeast Asia (discussed in Chapter 10), and were instrumental in validating newly rising kingdoms. These religions, Buddhism in particular, quickly found wide acceptance among the populace. Starting in the twelfth century, Islam, carried by Arab and Chinese traders, began to gain influence in the region as well. Religious ideas, however, were not the only sort of foreign influence at work in Southeast Asia. Throughout this time trade expanded and, as

demand for Southeast Asian goods rose abroad, colonial powers saw the region as an attractive target (see “Southeast Asian Ceramics,” above). European, East Asian, and American economic and military interests had profound consequences on regional history, culture, and society.

### BUDDHIST ART AND KINGSHIP

As Buddhism declined in the land of its origin, it continued to thrive in Southeast Asia, where it was shaped and developed in new ways. As it gained adherents among the population it, at times, became vital for rulers to align themselves with Buddhist ideas. Yet, in each case the individual incentives for espousing Buddhist ideas were as varied as the artistic forms they employed.





#### 24-17 • SEATED BUDDHA

From Angkor Thom. Reign of Jayavarman VII, late 12th–early 13th century. Sandstone, 4'6" (1.4 m). National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh.

**SEATED BUDDHA** When Khmer king Jayavarman VII took his place on the throne of Angkor in 1181, it marked the end of a long struggle against internal rebellions and foreign invaders. Under his reign, he raised up the kingdom of Angkor in a final efflorescence, building more than any of his royal predecessors. In an unusual move, he elected to associate himself with the Buddha, rather than with a Hindu deity and in so doing adapted Buddhist ideas to the Khmer concept of the god-king or, in his case, the buddha-king (*buddharaja*). Before undertaking construction of his massive temple-mountain complex at Angkor Thom, he sought legitimacy for his claims of Buddhist authority by dedicating large temples to each of his parents in the guise of bodhisattvas. This process was taken to a logical conclusion by associating himself directly with the Buddha (as well as with the bodhisattva Lokeshvara).

Although Jayavarman VII's artists and architects produced a staggering number of spectacular sculptures and grand temples, few are as sublime as a simple sandstone Buddha image in the collection of the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh (FIG. 24-17). A few similar images exist and in each example the seated

Buddha displays similar physiognomic features. The consistency in these facial features has led scholars to believe that these works are in fact portraits of Jayavarman VII himself, seated serenely in the guise of the Buddha. Just as his ancestors had conceptually linked themselves with Hindu deities, Jayavarman VII represented himself as a Buddha with downturned meditative eyes, distended earlobes, hair pulled back into a topknot, and dressed in a simple garment. The authority of the king and Buddha are here expressed in a single understated, almost humble, image.

**SHWEDAGON STUPA, MYANMAR** In northern Burma, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, rulers raised innumerable religious monuments—temples, monasteries, and stupas—in the Bagan Plain, following the scriptures of Theravada Buddhism. To the south arose the port city of Yangon (formerly known as Rangoon, called Dagon in antiquity). Established by Mon rulers before the eleventh century, Yangon is the site of the **SHWEDAGON STUPA** (FIG. 24-18), which enshrines relics of the four past Buddhas, including hair from Shakyamuni. The modern structures of Shwedagon ("Golden Dagon") rise from an ancient Mon core that was rebuilt and enlarged in the fourteenth century.



#### 24-18 • SHWEDAGON STUPA (PAGODA)

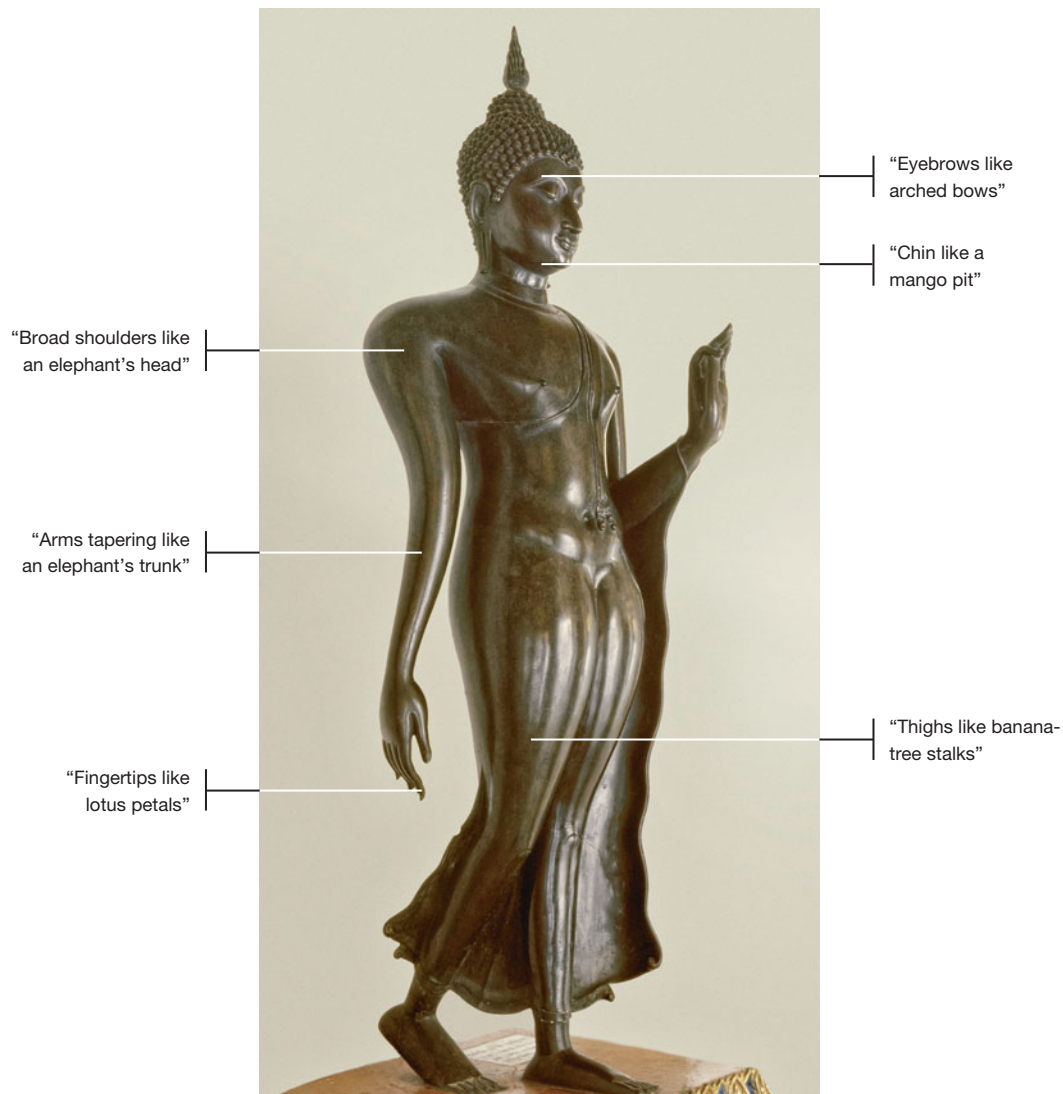
Yangon, Myanmar. 15th century; construction at the site dates from at least the 14th century, with continuous replastering and redecoration to the present.

## A CLOSER LOOK | The Sukhothai Buddha

From Wat Mahathat, now in Wat Benchamabophit, Bangkok, Thailand.

Bronze, 7'22" (2.2 m). Sukhothai period, 14th–15th century.

The graceful Buddhas of the Sukhothai period were at times further enhanced by a second Sukhothai innovation, images of the walking Buddha. Sukhothai Buddhas reveal not just the surface of the Buddha's form, but also suggest aspects of his character and life. Smooth skin is indicative of royal upbringing; long arms and broad shoulders mark someone born into a lineage of warriors; and by not depicting his genitals the artists allude to his celibacy as an ascetic. Consider the following descriptions taken from Buddhist texts in relation to this example.



 [View](#) the Closer Look for the Sukhothai Buddha on myartslab.com

In subsequent decades it underwent continual restoration and enhancement at the hands of pious Burmese kings and queens. The site continues to be a focus for lavish devotion and generosity. The bell-shaped spire is capped by a umbrellalike ornament (*hti*) adorned with a large diamond and the sides of the terraces are covered in sheets of gold plate. While most of this wealth was donated by royalty, over the centuries people from all walks of

life have offered gold for its construction and maintenance. Images of the Buddha, and sometimes his footprints alone, provide focal points for devotion.

**TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDHA, THAILAND** The Dvaravati culture remained regionally dominant until Khmer invasions in the tenth century. During this turmoil a new ethnic



group, the Thai, entered the scene from the north, gradually gaining control and adopting Buddhism, as well as some aspects of Hinduism, from the Mon. The first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai, was established in 1238 and flourished under the guidance of kings like the renowned Ram Khamhaeng, before falling to rival Thai states.

The Sukhothai period is praised as a formative time of innovation and creativity in Thai art. Among their creations, the artists of this period championed an elegant new style of Buddha image. With attenuated heads adorned with spirelike flames and draping, almost boneless, limbs, the Buddha images of this period are immediately recognizable. The otherworldly qualities of the Sukhothai Buddhas have led art historians to explore possible explanations for their distinctive features. One strong possibility is that they are, quite literally, poetry given tangible form (see “A Closer Look,” page 787). The artists may have been working from descriptions found in the Indian Buddhist texts, which use evocative similes to describe the Buddha’s beautiful appearance.

Despite its cultural importance, the kingdom of Sukhothai did not last long, giving way to a succession of dynasties. The capital

was eventually moved south to Bangkok and under the rule of the Chakri king Rama I, construction began there on a grand new temple to house the Thais’ most sacred Buddha image.

The Emerald Buddha (“emerald” refers to its color; it is actually made of jadeite) is featured in legends that place its creation in India under the direction of major Buddhist figures and trace its travels through great Buddhist nations of the past. These stories, although not grounded in historical evidence, suggest that the image has a special link to the world’s foremost Buddhist kings, among whose lineage the Thai king is the most recent. The king himself ritually changes the image’s golden garments three times a year. In one of these costumes the Emerald Buddha is dressed as a king, further strengthening the association between the Buddha and the state.

The temple complex that houses this sacred image is suitably spectacular (**FIG. 24-19**). The enclosure covers over 200 acres and contains hundreds of buildings, most of which are crowned by high pointed roofs tiled in vibrant orange and green. These colorful rooftops shade the walls and pillars whose surfaces are inset with intricate patterns of glass, gold leaf, and tile that shimmer in



**24-19 • TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDHA (WAT PHRA KAEW)**  
Grand Palace Complex, Bangkok, Thailand. 1782, and greatly expanded in later centuries.





**24-20 • MINARET, KUDUS MOSQUE**

1549. Kudus, Java, Indonesia.

dedicated to one of Java's nine great saints. Although the mosque itself has been renovated, most of the towerlike **MINARET** still survives from the earliest phase of construction in 1549 (**FIG. 24-20**). Its brickwork and decorative niches are reminiscent of earlier Hindu shrine towers but this structure served to call Muslims to worship five times daily. In a traditional Javanese fashion, this was done with a large drum (*bedug*) along with the sung prayers typical in other parts of the world. The lower bands of the tower are decorated with inset porcelain plates imported from China, which add color to the exterior. The various indigenous and international influences that helped shape this tower speak to the remarkably cosmopolitan nature of sixteenth-century Java.

the intense sunlight. Although the core of this complex dates to 1782, it has been greatly expanded in later centuries and remains an important Thai religious and political center.

### ISLAMIC ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Muslim merchants played a major role in overseas trade and they frequently spent months at port waiting for the trade winds to change. Over time their faith, Islam, was accepted by local populations living in Malaysia and the island of Sumatra (Indonesia) around the Straits of Malacca. From there it spread across island Southeast Asia. Indonesia is today the world's most populous Muslim country.

**KUDUS MOSQUE, INDONESIA** Islamic monuments in Indonesia, like the earlier Hindu and Buddhist ones, draw from a rich and diverse repertoire of styles and motifs. One of the earliest examples of Islamic architecture in Java is the Kudus mosque,

## THE MODERN PERIOD

Marked by both inspirational expressions of peaceful resistance and bloody warfare, the modern history of South and Southeast Asia has been a study in extremes. But as the turmoil of earlier decades fades across most of the region, many states have emerged as leaders in international commerce, technology, and finance. In an international age, they are capitalizing on the region's centuries-old tradition of bridging cultures and adapting new ideas. These qualities are seen clearly in the South and Southeast Asian art of the Modern period which blends the traditional with the new.

### MODERN SOUTH ASIA

In the wake of World War II, the imperial powers of Europe began to shed their colonial domains. The attainment of self-rule had been five long decades in the making, when finally—chastened by the non-violent example of Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)—the British Empire relinquished its “Jewel in the Crown,” which was





**24-21 • Maqbool Fida Husain VEDIC**  
From the *Theorama* series, 1994. Limited edition color print, 23½" × 36" (60 × 92 cm).



**24-22 • PETRONAS TOWERS**  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 1998.

partitioned to form the modern nations of India, Pakistan, and (in 1972) Bangladesh. After independence in 1947, the exuberant young nations welcomed a modern, internationalist approach to art and architecture.

**MAQBOOL FIDA HUSAIN** One of India's most influential and prolific modern artists was M. F. Husain (1915–2011). Beginning his career in the 1940s, he embraced Modernism and used its techniques to express South Asian themes. He drew his subjects from diverse sources such as Hindu literature, historical events, and the natural world, as well as from the traditions of his Muslim upbringing. He was exceedingly productive and his range of subject matter at times drew controversy from religious groups who objected to his appropriation of religious imagery. These complaints led him reluctantly to spend the final years of his life in Qatar but he consistently returned to South Asian themes for his inspiration.

His simplified and schematic style can be seen in the *Theorama* series, which addresses nine of the world's major religions. Pictured here is **VEDIC** (FIG. 24-21), Hussain's tribute to Hinduism. Despite its abstraction, the figure of Krishna can be seen dancing on the serpent deity Kaliya, whose body merges with the story of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk (see FIG. 10-41). The event pivots on a triangular form with three faces reminiscent of the Shiva from Elephanta (see FIG. 10-22), and a goddess on elephant-back dispenses abundance in the form of coins or seeds falling from her outstretched hand. The composition is framed on the right by a seated ascetic whose head is a spoked wheel. This wheel may reference the spinning wheels whose use Gandhi advocated to break

dependence on British textiles, but it also reaches back further into the South Asian past and evokes the wheel of *dharma*.

## MODERN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The transition from colonial control varied greatly across Southeast Asia, due largely to the range of colonial powers in the region and their varying attitudes toward relinquishing control. Some nations, like Thailand, managed to avoid imperial domination entirely, whereas others fought long wars to establish their independence. In some cases, the power vacuum was filled by local regimes that brought new hardship, like the horrors perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. The region has gradually achieved stability and growing prosperity as exemplified by its internationally recognized artwork and contemporary architecture.

**THE PETRONAS TOWERS, MALAYSIA** Dominating the skyline of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, are the **PETRONAS TOWERS** (FIG. 24-22), which from 1998 to 2004 were the tallest structures in the world. These paired skyscrapers, linked by a sky bridge at the 41st and 42nd floors, are built primarily of reinforced concrete surrounded by a casing of steel and glass. They were designed collaboratively by Argentine architect César Pelli and Filipino-Malaysian engineer Deejay Cerico, who drew inspiration in their designs from traditional Malaysian Islamic forms. The towers stand 1,242 feet tall and took seven years to build. Today the buildings house many business offices, a shopping mall, and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, and are characteristic of the new growth and development across the region.

## THINK ABOUT IT

- 24.1** Consider the paintings *Jahangir and Shah Abbas* (FIG. 24-8) and *Mother India* (FIG. 24-15). What are the political messages and at whom were they directed? Who would have seen these works?
- 24.2** Analyze the form of the Gateway of India (FIG. 24-14) in relation to the ancient Roman form of the triumphal arch—see, for example, the Arch of Titus (FIG. 6-36). Explain what aspects are European and which derive from South Asian architecture.
- 24.3** The Emerald Buddha and the Seated Buddha from the reign of Jayavarman VII are both closely associated with royal power. Explain how each image lends authority to the king; emphasize both similarities and differences between the two examples.
- 24.4** Consider the Qutb Minar (FIG. 24-5) and Fatehpur Sikri. Do these structures reveal differences in the way each kingdom viewed itself in relation to wider Indian culture? If so, explain how. Can similar differences be seen when comparing the Victoria Terminus and the Gateway of India? Explain.

## CROSSCURRENTS

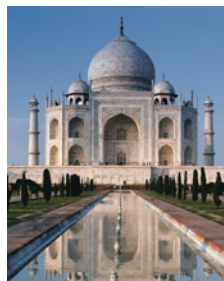


FIG. 24-1

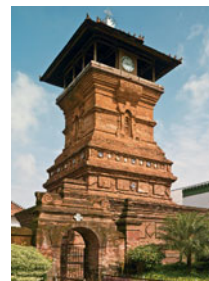


FIG. 24-20

Consider some of the ways that Islamic art and culture impacted South and Southeast Asia. Explain how the Taj Mahal and the Kudus mosque minaret are similar. In what ways do they differ from one another? What historical and cultural influences help account for those differences?